

JOURNALISTS: ONCE VALUED, NOW VILIFIED

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ABSTRACT

This study utilizes Cultivation Theory, the Need for Cognition Scale (NFC), and the Media Trust Scale, to understand the general public's perception of journalists. It also attempts to gain insight on why there seems to be an increase in hostility towards journalists. Two surveys were conducted, one with the general public and one specifically for news industry employees. The survey for the general public yielded 195 participants while the second survey analyzed responses from 55 journalists. Major findings include: 1) the general public participants who scored higher on the NFC scale were more likely to have a negative perception of journalists, and 2) those who work in the news industry experience harassment, sexual harassment, and violence at an equal rate despite the number of years spent in the industry. This study was conducted by a journalist who has worked in the news industry for 10 years.

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INTRODUCTION

The term *media* is the plural form of *medium*. *The Media* is a term that used to simply refer to those who worked in media; those in journalism, those involved in television. Currently, there is a negative connotation placed on this phrase and it has become almost synonymous with the term *Fake News* (Tamul, Ivory, Hotter, & Wolf, 2020). This study looks through the lens of Cultivation Theory in an attempt to explain the negative connotation associated with *The Media*.

Utilizing Cultivation Theory, the author aims to highlight the way negative or stereotypical portrayals of journalists in media influence the general public. These negative messages come from movies, television shows, and content that is found online on social media sites that show anti-news images or videos and even call for the killing of journalists. These messages could lead to larger issues regarding the profession of journalism. Those issues include public mistrust of journalists, violence against news employees, and the stereotyping of those who work in the news industry. This study will offer insight to those pursuing a career in the field of journalism and consumers of television programming, films, and online content alike. This research will also contribute to Cultivation Theory, media effects, and mass media studies by starting to fill some current gaps in published works. One gap within current literature includes research done from the perspective or standpoint of those who work in the news industry. Another gap includes studies conducted, either in full or in part, by journalists. The results of this study could lead to the expansion of certain areas of study or new ideas and concepts that could aid in the development of future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An Overview of Portrayals of Journalists in Media

The portrayals of journalists or reporters in film, television, and even plays have run the gamut. Sometimes the journalist is a hero. Other times, they are the villain. However, more often than not, research has shown that the portrayals of journalists are negative and that the character is developed in an inaccurate and unfair light (Ghiglione & Saltzman, 2005; McNair, 2010; Shaffer, 2009).

For their analysis of the portrayals of journalists in film and television, Ghiglione and Saltzman (2005) focused on how the news, reporters, and journalists were viewed in Hollywood. They took excerpts from scripts and viewed several scenes from various films ranging from the 1930s to the 1990s. They noted that surveys conducted in the early 2000s showed that the general public wanted unbiased media and expected to receive a diverse amount of information from media sources, yet the general public continually voiced their concern and suspicions about the news that was being disseminated. Some of the most noted suspicions included bias, negativity, and control over what the viewer saw. The researchers concluded that in the majority of films, there are several ‘standard items’ that are checked off a seemingly Hollywood-created portrayal list when it comes to characters or plots involving reporters or media companies. One of those items on the list consists of a fight scene between management and journalists in the field. Another portion of the list is further separated into how films classify journalists or how the directors have the actors portray a journalist. The main categories the researchers sorted their findings for the content analysis into *the hero*, *the sob sister*, or *annoying*. They noted that journalists were portrayed as heroes most often when the main character is, in fact, a superhero. For example, journalists are often portrayed as

heroes in films involving Superman. The category of sob sister included characters with almost child-like tendencies that involved whining, crying, and so forth. The characters were seen as annoying when they were portrayed as unintelligent, loud, or forgetful. The following quote summarizes their research on how reporters are viewed in real life and in film.

Ghiglione and Saltzman (2005) stated:

For some, the reporter conjures warm memories of a favorite actor phoning in a story that will save the world. For others, the reporter is part of a harassing pack of newsmen and women relentlessly hounding an innocent victim. But for most, the reporter is perceived as a strange mixture of hero and scoundrel eliciting adoration and hatred, affection and scorn. These images have built a love-hate relationship in the American consciousness that is at the center of its confusion about the media in American society today. (p. 2)

Ghiglione and Saltzman's (2005) findings are similar to others who have conducted comparable research and align with what Ehrlich (2006) found in his study. Ehrlich (2006) noted that many films or TV series that feature reporters establish an underlying guide of how journalists are supposed to act. This expectation of behavior is also meant to mirror real-world expectations. In other words, both in media and real life, journalists are expected to see the world objectively, and report only the truth and facts. Ehrlich (2006) also noted that his findings aligned with what Saltzman (2002) found through a content analysis of how journalists are portrayed in film. Saltzman (2002) reviewed dozens of films where a journalist or reporter was considered to play a significant role in these films. Both Ehrlich (2006) and Saltzman (2002) stated that in many of these films, the journalist is often acting like the 'bad guy.' This often meant that the journalist can lie, use bribery, find ways around

ethical approaches, and even steal information as long as the end result is good for the people.

Shaffer (2009) also conducted a content analysis and examined over two dozen plays, movies, and television shows that featured a journalist as one of the main characters or important characters in the storyline. The researcher noted that since at least the 1920s, members of the press, journalists, and reporters have been included as characters within films or plays. The analysis found that sometimes the journalist was considered the hero in the media but more often than not, the journalist is portrayed as the villain in a story or, at the very least, a character that is less than wholesome. Shaffer (2009) also noted the relationship between media, art, public interest, and public perception. He stated that media and attitudes often reflect each other. In this relationship, each is responsible for creating and reinforcing what is viewed as 'normal.' Therefore, if the general public feels hostile towards journalists or feels that journalists are not trustworthy, these feelings will be portrayed within the art or entertainment of the era. In Shaffer's (2009) analysis, art and entertainment included movies and television shows. He found that many of the media portrayals showed the journalist being more interested in fame and glory rather than helping the general public or bringing awareness to an issue. The repetition of this type of portrayal supports a certain ideal surrounding who a journalist is or reinforces a stereotype. This particular stereotype has been seen repeatedly in the media where a journalist is one of the main characters. However, it is also seen in various other shows where the journalist plays a smaller role (Shaffer, 2009).

McNair (2010) authored and published a book focused on the portrayal of journalists in film. He began the analysis of these portrayals with films created in the 1930s. In his book, he devoted entire chapters to specific topics such as the portrayal of female journalists in

film. His analysis also focused on films made and released in the time frame from 1997 to 2008. In McNair's (2010) analysis, he noted that films and cinema often reflect current events; a belief that Shaffer (2009) also held. McNair (2010) stated that films made in the United States of America also had more influence internationally than films made and released outside of the United States.

McNair (2010) also addressed true-life events and comments made by political or prominent figures. He found that these comments were derogatory to journalists and often occurred when a report published by a news agency or journalist highlighted a mistake made by the political or prominent figure. The author stated in these cases, the public seemed to admire the journalist for exposing the truth. However, he noted that as swiftly as that journalistic esteem came, the public would just as quickly turn against a news agency or journalist if a report was done that the public did not like. He noted that in reality, a journalist has grown to be viewed as more of a character than an individual. McNair (2010) stated:

The journalist is a cultural icon surrounded by both love and loathing, resentment and respect, admiration and anger – a figure perceived as both hero and villain, treated like a rock star at one moment, and a reptile the next. In relation to few professions are cultural stereotypes so extreme and apparently opposed. Nor are there many professions in which the imagined reality is so different from the actual. (p. 13)

McNair (2010) noted that film and cinema have a broader reach than television shows, stating once more that films can become popular internationally. He argued that films are often centered around one standpoint rather than showcasing multiple angles or opposing viewpoints. With that centralized standpoint comes a centralized audience vantagepoint. This vantagepoint is also a reflection of the film-makers' stances on issues and characters, like

journalists. McNair (2010) explained that often, the film-makers have their own perceptions of what a journalist or reporter should be and pair that with what they assume the general public is expecting a journalist or reporter to be. Because of this, the author points out many inaccuracies that are in films involving these journalistic characters and the industry in which they work. These inaccuracies are then absorbed by the viewers and again, the cycle continues. This cycle and the repeated messages, similar in kind, found in films leads to the furthering of stereotypes of the news industry and its employees. While many films often spark debate or forums where the plot and characters are discussed, the platform is still singularly held by the film-makers and actors. McNair (2010) addressed this issue of singularity as well, stating that films are considered narratives and therefore have the tendency to embellish or mythicize a story to create a more compelling, and audience engaging, version.

Narrative in Television and Film: Why it Matters

Rowland's (2016) interpretation of narrative is, "Narrative is not just a form of entertainment, but also a means for understanding the world" (p. 126). Based on this interpretation, people who watch films or television shows that include poor and inaccurate portrayals of journalists, could use those media to formulate beliefs about journalists' integrity, motives, and character. This interpretation has the potential to impact how people respond to or interact with journalists in the future. Another piece to the narrative puzzle is narrative function. Rowland (2016) defined narrative function as what the narrative does to the audience or, how it makes them feel afterward. The goal of the narrative function is to elicit emotion from the audience. This goal is achieved with each character's actions, words, tone of voice, and nonverbal cues. While the goal of the narrative function is to evoke

emotion, these emotions can also influence the audience to act or react in certain ways. Since narratives are viewed as stories, the overall goal is to therefore get and keep the audiences' attention. Lucaites and Condit (1985) stated that the three goals of a narrative are to delight, to instruct, and to move. The authors also separated narrative function into three categories: poetic, dialectical, and rhetorical. The authors stated that the poetic function is to showcase or express beauty, the dialectical function is for discovery, presentation, or to have a revelation about a truth. The rhetorical function is a form of persuasion and the end result of what that persuasion achieves (Lucaites & Condit, 1985). One way to accomplish each of these functions is by making a story more entertaining. This entertainment is often done through embellishments. While embellishments may command attention and elicit emotion, these embellishments could impact the way historical events are remembered. These embellishments could also produce negative effects when untruths are shared as truths. The common movie-goer may not do any further research into the topic the movie they are seeing is centered around. This face-value acceptance is also harmful because it skews the idea of what and who a journalist is in reality. Consumers of a narrative, film, or television show may accept these portrayals as truth and possibly share the summary of the movie with others. These actions only build up the untruth as truth and add more perceived credibility to that untruth.

The concept of perceived credibility can be defined as narrative fidelity. Narrative fidelity is when a consumer hears a story and internally begins a process of determining how true the story is. They determine this by internally analyzing how many other stories they have heard that are similar. The combination of these similar stories and the person's own knowledge and experiences they have had in their own lives create their version of the truth

or narrative fidelity (Rowland 2016). This type of narrative fidelity can lead to misinterpretations, inaccuracies, and stereotyping of journalists.

Misinterpretations of journalists and the news business can be detrimental to community relations between reporters as individuals, news agencies as a whole, and the general public. Misinterpretations could also affect the news industry itself if it influences aspiring journalists to change their career path. The following sections will analyze specific scenes from films and messages found in entertainment media regarding journalists.

Portrayals of Journalists in Entertainment Media

Negative Messages in a TV Series

An example of negative messages pertaining to journalists can be seen in the television series *Law and Order: SVU*. Shniderman (2014) stated that through his analysis of multiple television shows about criminal activity and the criminal justice system, such as CSI and the Law and Order franchise, there is a discrepancy of how the scenarios play out on screen versus real life. He found that most of the portrayals are an inaccurate representation of how the situation would be resolved in reality. However, the researcher stated that these shows are how many Americans gain knowledge about the criminal justice system.

Multiple episodes of the Law and Order: SVU series include journalists or reporters as characters on the show (Wolf & Pressman, 2021). For example, if the journalist is seen as an individual, they are often cast as the villain for publishing information that is unconfirmed by law enforcement. The journalist is also often blamed for causing protests, riots, or in one episode, the death of a man falsely accused of a crime by the general public. If a group of journalists are seen covering the result of a trial, once the defendant or prosecutor is on the courthouse steps, the reporters are portrayed as ‘bulldogs’ or ‘sharks.’ These terms are meant

to describe how the reporters swarm the victims, detectives who investigated the case, the prosecutor, or anyone else involved in the trial or alleged crime. The reporters are seen asking questions in a rapid-fire style while the people being questioned are physically shielding themselves with their hands, arms, folders, papers, or briefcases, and moving quickly away from the ‘mob’ of reporters. In Season 11, Episode 10, titled “Anchor,” news personnel are referred to as “vultures” and the entire episode centers around a man who kills three children because a man who has a television talk show (lumped in with and referred to as ‘news programming’) told the viewers that they should take any actions necessary to prevent illegal immigrants from staying in the United States. The alleged killer then used a brainwashing defense and was found not guilty by a jury. The seemingly only situations where reporters or journalists are portrayed more humanely, such as showing emotions like compassion, grief, and pain, are when the journalists are victims of rape or a sexual assault (Wolf & Pressman, 2021). While many television shows may feature journalists or reporters as supporting characters, there are some films that make the journalist the main character or a major player in the movie’s plot.

The Films Richard Jewell and Bombshell

The film *Richard Jewell* was nominated for 17 awards, including nominations to national organizations like the Academy Awards and the Golden Globes. Of those nominations, the film won four awards. One of these awards being Movie of the Year (IMDb, 2020). However, as soon as the film debuted in 2019, a firestorm of analyses, commentary, and reports questioning the accuracy of the film emerged. Many of these analyses, commentaries, and reports came from journalists as well as a family member and friends of one of the main characters in the film, Kathy Scruggs, a real-life journalist.

To summarize the movie *Richard Jewell*, the film is based on a true story and is alleged by the movie producers to be an accurate portrayal of events that began in 1996 at the Olympic games that were being held in Atlanta, Georgia. Richard Jewell is a man who found a suspicious looking backpack in a park where thousands of people were gathered. He notified authorities who came and inspected the backpack however, there was an explosion resulting in many deaths. For a short time after the bombing, Jewell was hailed as a hero but soon became the prime suspect for the bombing and was investigated by the FBI. In the film, news reporters and one specific journalist, Kathy Scruggs, are categorized as the main catalyst that made Jewell be viewed as guilty by the public before the investigation was completed.

The first scene of the movie that introduced Scruggs takes place in a newsroom for the newspaper where Scruggs is employed, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Her coworkers are at their desks and it is quiet in the newsroom. Then, when Scruggs appears, she is rushing into the newsroom and heads toward her desk with a gait and demeanor that suggests anger and frustration. Since her first second on camera, she has been ranting about a story assignment she was given and how it was not “exciting” and that she deserved a better assignment. She is speaking at a loud volume, with an irritated tone, and her appearance is disheveled. After she gets to her desk, she begins to straighten her clothing and hair. She is approached by a male manager of the paper and begins ranting again. He tries to calm her and speaks in a very low tone and with a tranquil manner. She then says to this male manager, “*I’m getting my tits done. What do you think? D-cup?*” This scene is the first instance of how the film portrayed the female journalist, Scruggs, in a negative light. She is introduced as someone who has a temper, is entitled (declaring to the newsroom that she

deserved a better story assignment and relies on her looks and features (her breasts) to advance her career. Throughout the following scenes with Scruggs, she is loud, demanding, competitive, and flirtatious. In the newsroom, she mocks her coworkers about how their “*boring*” stories do not make the front page of the AJC and says, “*Oh, I’m sorry,*” in a sarcastic tone and she feigns sympathy and continues with another rant on another topic.

In the first scene where Scruggs and the FBI Agent, also a main character, appear together takes place at a concert. The FBI Agent is there for security and to monitor crowds for any suspicious activity. The concert is being held as an adjoining event to the Olympic Games and Scruggs is assigned to write about the concert. She finds the FBI Agent in the crowd and it is clear they have spoken before and have a somewhat friendly relationship. Scruggs begins dancing to the music as the FBI Agent remains still and stoic. Scruggs is being flirtatious toward the agent and tries to persuade him to “*have a little fun*” and “*lighten up*” and dance with her to the song, which has a slower pace. She repeatedly gets close to him while dancing, swaying back and forth, and brushes his shoulder with hers.

The scene under the most scrutiny for this analysis takes place in a bar. The bar has low lighting and only a few other people are present. Scruggs and the FBI Agent are seated at the bar on bars stools away from everyone else but are sitting very close and facing one another. Scruggs is wearing a silky, low cut blouse that makes a V as it goes down her chest. She repeatedly puts her hand on the FBI Agent’s leg and arm and continues to touch him as they have a conversation. She tries to get more and more information from him about the investigation and he continues to reject her persuasive efforts and stated “*You couldn’t fuck it out of them, Kathy. What makes you think you could fuck it out of me?*” To this she coyly continues flirtatious behavior and speaking to him in soft and sly tones. The FBI Agent

eventually gives her the information she wants and as soon as he does, she responds with surprise then speaks poorly about Jewell (the prime suspect and the name the FBI Agent just revealed) then says, “*You wanna get a room or just go to my car?*” The FBI Agent says in shock “*This is happening?*” to which Scruggs replies, “*This is happening.*” The camera then shows a wide shot of the pair as they grab their jackets and get ready to leave the bar. Then, the movie goes to the next scene.

Scruggs’ brother, friends, and former coworkers have stated that Scruggs trading sex for information is untrue. Another issue raised by those who knew Scruggs best is that she is no longer alive and was therefore never consulted about this portrayal and cannot defend herself and her integrity as a journalist. They go on to say that this kind of portrayal of journalists, female journalists in particular, is detrimental to those who are working and will work in the news business. Scruggs’ former coworkers think the way in which Scruggs is portrayed in the film is embellished and her brother says no one from the film’s crew contacted him (Nathoo, 2019).

Scruggs’ brother stated in Nathoo’s (2019) web article:

I am Kathy Scruggs's brother and only remaining member of our immediate family, Lewis Scruggs Jr. told AJC in a Nov. 26 article about the film. I find it interesting that during Ms. Wilde's extensive research of Kathy, she did not bother to contact me or any of Kathy's very close friends. (para. 17)

Another film titled, *Bombshell*, was also released in 2019. *Bombshell* is a film based on the real-life investigation of Roger Ailes, the CEO of FOX News at the time, for sexual harassment. This film features many journalists as the main characters. The film shows viewers what female journalists, or aspiring female journalists, endured at the FOX News

corporation during a time of rampant sexual harassment and assault. This film also underwent scrutiny and analysis from those in the news industry, even from within the same company that the movie was centered around.

Shammas (2019) wrote an article published by the Washington Post in 2019. She stated that real-life FOX News host Jesse Watters said in a live broadcast that female reporters sleeping with sources for information happens “all the time.” Watters said this during a talk show on FOX called ‘*The Five*.’ This article also quotes several other journalists, male and female, who took issue with what Watters said. Watters eventually stated that male reporters could do it too but Shammas (2019) stated that for many journalists and female rights advocates, the damage was already done. Watters’ comments came shortly after the FOX News corporation had already seen its fair share of allegations regarding sexual harassment and abuse. Bill O’Reilly was fired from FOX after allegations of sexual harassment in 2017. This termination took place after the initial investigation into sexual harassment claims against Ailes began in 2016. Multiple news articles stated that more than 20 women came forward to file claims of sexual harassment against Ailes during the investigation.

Both films *Bombshell* and *Richard Jewell* focused on actions taken by journalists and featured scenes involving newsrooms. *Bombshell* grossed nearly 60 million dollars at the box office worldwide with nearly 32 million dollars being brought in at theatres in the United States. The movie *Richard Jewell* grossed more than 43 million dollars worldwide and more than 22 million dollars in the United States (IMDb, 2020). While the controversial portrayal of Kathy Scruggs in *Richard Jewell* could have had an impact on ticket sales, both films attracted thousands of people to theatres worldwide and could attract as many viewers with

the release of the films on DVD and streaming services. Viewership and consumption of this magnitude could be detrimental to those in the news industry, especially female journalists.

Research Focused on Female Journalists

Saltzman (20219) wrote an article about Hollywood's portrayal of female journalists. Saltzman (2019) noted that in his decades of research about the portrayal of female journalists, there is a common trend. That trend is that the female journalist usually ends up falling in love with, developing feelings for, or has sexual intercourse with the subject of her story or with a coworker. Saltzman (2019) quoted lines from a film where the male subject of a story criticized the female journalist with whom he has previously had a sexual relationship. Saltzman (2019) also gave examples of films where female journalists had sexual intercourse with a male in some sort of powerful position, like a political figure or law enforcement officer, to get information or to get an exclusive story. In some of these films, the female journalist soon became a victim of murder and the suspect was the source she slept with to get the information.

McNair (2010) echoes some of the sentiments above and stated that while he believes portrayals of female journalists have become more positive, he also found a trend through his analysis. The trend was, if a female journalist is covering soft news or fluff pieces, like entertainment and style, they are depicted as 'beautiful.' In these scenarios, beauty was expressed by the female wearing more makeup, having a stylish hairdo, and wearing nice clothing. He also noted that these entertainment and style reporters are given more feminine characteristics. He elaborated on these feminine characteristics stating they included nurturing behavior, being soft spoken, and being submissive. He also found that when female journalists have tougher assessments, like covering crimes, doing investigative journalism, or

being a foreign war correspondent, they are given more masculine traits and are seen as less stylish. Here, masculine traits mean being assertive, determined, and speaking up for themselves and others.

Saltzman (2019) stated that poor, inaccurate portrayals of female journalists leads to the continuation of sexism and discrimination. He also stated that these types of portrayals objectify the female journalist. All ideals that carry over into reality, even within newsrooms.

Saltzman (2002) stated that the messages found in films and TV shows seem to portray harsh consequences for journalists when they act in their own interest rather than the interest of the public. He stated the consequences often result in the journalist being banished from the profession or, more often than not, killed. These messages about consequences, that are portrayed as ‘normal,’ could also lead to similar actions being taken in the real world.

Dangers Journalists Face in Reality

Belmaker (2014) stated that a 2014 survey of more than 1,000 female journalists was conducted by the International Women’s Media Foundation and the News Safety Institute. Results showed that two thirds of respondents had experienced some sort of act of intimidation or threats of abuse while they were on the job. The foundation and institute also noted that the most common problems encountered by these female journalists included outright threats, abuse of power, and/or attempts to damage or degrade the journalists’ reputation. Belmaker’s (2014) article suggests news reporters and journalists, both male and female, who cover issues overseas and outside of America’s borders are more likely to encounter dangers currently than in previous years.

An example of these dangers can be found in an article entitled, *Mexican newspaper says a reporter slain, decapitated* that was published by the Associated Press. The Associated Press (2020) reported that a Mexican journalist had been murdered and decapitated in Veracruz, Mexico. The article, published in early September of 2020, stated that so far that year, six journalists had been killed in Mexico and that over 140 journalists had been murdered in Mexico over the past two decades.

Another example of international dangers included a development in a case dating back to 2008. The Department of Justice (2020) announced the arrest of a person from Afghanistan who kidnapped an American journalist at gunpoint in 2008. The kidnapper held the journalist hostage for seven months. After more than 10 years, the kidnapper was extradited to the United States to face the charges. While violence may be worse for journalists in other countries, there are still threats and assaults happening to reporters in America.

Physical Assaults

Physical assaults of news personnel have also been occurring more frequently within the last several years (U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, 2021). According to the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker's records, since the year 2017, 429 journalists have been physically attacked while covering protests. The website also states that in 2018, five newspaper journalists were killed because of their profession when a man opened fire at the newspaper office after becoming angry with the news outlet. One independent journalist was also shot and killed in 2018 but at this moment, police have not confirmed whether the shooting was related to the journalist's work specifically. Over the course of the year 2020, 392 journalists were assaulted, at least 98 journalists had their equipment damaged by protestors, rioters, or a

hostile individual while in the field, and 126 journalists were detained or arrested while working. With a total of 518 attacks on file, 385 of the attacks occurred in 2020, 35 attacks occurred in 2019, 35 attacks occurred in 2018, and 50 occurred in 2017 (U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, 2021).

Physical attacks classified as unprovoked are also becoming more common (U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, 2021). Examples of the increase in physical assaults are as follows. In Rock Island, Illinois a man ran toward a news photographer, physically removed the photographer's hat, stole the camera and repeatedly smashed the camera on the ground (WQAD, 2020). The incident was recorded by the photographer on his cell phone and charges were filed against the man responsible for the attack and property damage. In 2020, an Atlanta, Georgia reporter had just completed a live report about a car crash. She went to edit footage in a news van and was in the back of the van when the news vehicle was hijacked by a woman. The woman then drove for a short period of time before crashing the news vehicle. Both women were taken to the hospital and suffered minor injuries (Kephart, 2020).

Randazzo (2020) noted that in September of 2020, Congress passed an act that honored fallen journalists. The legislation titled the Fallen Journalists Memorial Act (H.R. 3465), would establish a national memorial site that would honor news employees such as editors, photographers, broadcasters, and writers who died while reporting the news. As this study is being conducted, the legislation is awaiting a presidential signature. While this legislation is regarded by many in the news business as a step in the right direction, physical assaults are only one avenue for harassment of journalists. Other types of harassment include

messages received via online platforms from both acquaintances and strangers along with discrimination and sexism within newsrooms.

Online Harassment, Sexism, and Discrimination

Berg (1972) noted that it is a commonly held belief that mass media impacts a person's view of reality. He noted that mass media's rhetoric functions as narrative or storytelling. He stated that the people building that narrative tend to go use more dramatic stories or video to deliver their message. While he gave examples of television news broadcasts, his argument could include films; even movies that are said to be based on facts or true-life events. Building upon Berg's (1972) argument, the internet could also be included in the mass media category. Warnick (2001) stated that the internet has also become a place for rhetoric to be produced and distributed to the masses. Warnick (2001) also stated that some sites encourage interaction from the public, giving them a chance to voice their opinions and concerns.

An estimated one in three people in the world use social media and 3.5 billion people are online. This vast platform allows people the liberty to spread and share whatever content they choose since the internet has very little regulation. Since the development of chat or messaging services and social media, the internet is also a platform used for communicating. Sometimes that communication is unwanted and includes messages that are classified as harassment (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019).

Finneman and Jenkins (2018) addressed an uptick in criticism of journalists, especially female journalists, since the rise is social media's popularity. The researchers noted that the expectation of female reporters (hair, clothes, weight, image) had changed very little, if at all, from a study that was conducted in 2000. They also included several instances

that lead to some change, or at least awareness of, issues women faced in the industry. One example included that it was only after Barbara Walters became a prominent figure in the news industry in the late 1970s that more women became news anchors and reporters. Another instance included the lawsuit one female anchor filed in the 1980s because she was removed from her position as an anchor. The reason she was removed was due to management telling her that she was “too ugly” and did not appeal to men. The researchers also gathered examples of online harassment from a variety of sources such as: videos posted by news stations addressing viewer comments, videos done by outside agencies addressing harassment of broadcasters, and print articles. The viewer comments that were analyzed included a range of language and topics, from death threats to comments on how female anchors could improve their looks.

Finneman and Jenkins’ (2018) survey resulted in responses from 70 people who worked in the news industry with most of the respondents being female. The responses indicated that 76 percent of participants had received criticism from viewers about their looks with some comments being classified as sexual harassment. Participants reported that they felt social media had increased their accessibility to viewers but there was no way to hold the viewers who made degrading comments accountable. The majority of respondents said they would not reply to viewers who made comments that the participants considered an unwanted form of communication.

Eberspacher (2019) focused her study strictly on unwanted communication received via social media. She analyzed the types of messages and comments female and male reporters received on their social media accounts and noticed a pattern. The pattern resulted in the conclusion that female reporters are three times more likely to receive hateful, sexist,

and violent messages and comments than male reporters. The female reporters were threatened with rape and other violent actions by these online harassers. In her study, the overall feeling held by the female reporters regarding these messages was one of fear. These reporters were worried about the online threats actually coming to fruition and being carried out by the people making those types of comments.

Eberspacher (2019) noted that news organizations themselves were part of the problem because there is sexual harassment and various other types of harassment still happening within newsrooms. She noted that the majority of the people in leadership positions within these newsrooms are male and have not experienced this kind of harassment personally, whether that harassment happened in a physical sense or online. One solution she offered was to mandate more training within newsrooms on how to handle these types of situations on every level, from front line workers to managers. She also suggested that newsrooms should be prepared to take legal action against the perpetrator regardless of where the harassment took place.

Graff (2020) wrote an article addressing harassment of female journalists. She noted that after the harassment was reported, there appeared to be no changes or legal action taken. She stated that 29 female journalists in California, specifically around the San Francisco Bay Area, wrote and published an open letter about a man who writes a blog solely focused on their looks and female anatomy. The journalists who wrote the letter called his actions and words vile, sexist, misogynistic, and cruel. A particular article written by the male blogger, titled “Boner of the Day,” was referenced specifically (Graff, 2020). The women who wrote the open letter stated that the male blogger had even tried to pit them against one another at times by creating and spreading rumors about the women. While this type of behavior could

be classified as harassment or even libel, at the time this research is being conducted, the male blogger has not faced any legal repercussions. This example directly relates to Belmaker's (2014) research that stated one of the dangers faced by journalists includes attempts to destroy their reputation and degrade the individual.

U.S. Press Freedom Tracker (2021) analyzed data regarding negative tweets about the press during former president Donald J. Trump's time in office. They began their analysis of tweets on the day Trump announced his candidacy for president, July 15, 2015. Since that time, they noted that he tweeted a total of 2,520 negative tweets about the press. The most negative or anti-press tweets were posted in his last year in office. The amount of anti-press tweets were significantly less in his first two years than in the last two years where a dramatic increase was noted. The study also included a breakdown of the number of insulting tweets directed toward a specific journalist. This list included the top five journalists who received direct insults. In this category, Megyn Kelly, who was an anchor at FOX News and moderated a debate between Trump and other presidential candidates, received the most insulting tweets at 64. The other four journalists were all male and received at 24 to 46 fewer direct insulting tweets than Kelly. It was also noted in the study that Trump often referred to news media and journalists as the opposition (U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, 2021).

The information above, highlights the increase in acts of violence, physical assaults, sexual harassment, and online harassment specifically received by journalists. The research indicates that there has been an uptick in these crimes and behaviors within recent years.

Based on the information above, several hypotheses were generated.

H1a: People who have worked in the field of journalism longer have experienced more acts of violence.

H1b: There is not a difference between the acts of harassment experienced by either category of senior or novice reporters.

H1c: There is not a difference between the acts of sexual harassment experienced by either category of senior or novice reporters.

H2: Females currently working in the field of journalism have experienced more harassment than males.

This study takes into consideration the scenarios and information listed above along with the data included regarding the portrayal of journalists and reporters. Goals of this study include explaining and relating the attitudes and opinions the general public has about those who work in news to the media they consume. This explanation will be attempted by looking through the lens of Cultivation Theory.

Cultivation Theory and Media Influence

In his overview of cultivation analysis, Gerber (1998) reiterated his idea that the amount of television a person watched shaped the way they saw the world. Gerbner considered schools and churches to be the main sources of information for the public, but noted that television's popularity was growing. He noted that the public considered this medium to not only be a source of entertainment but also a platform from which to get information. Gerbner also believed that this medium held power over those who consumed its programming. Though some theories are directed toward the behavior of the consumer after watching certain programming, Gerbner concentrated his focus on how consumption would alter the consumer's beliefs and feelings about the world around them (Griffin, Ledbetter, & Sparks, 2015).

One of Gerbner's (2013) original writings about Cultivation Theory and his reasoning for creating it was reprinted in a 75th anniversary edition of a journal in 2013. In Gerbner's essay that was first published in 1977, the theorist stated that humans function differently than animals in that they understand and experience life and messages in symbolic context. This symbolism then shapes the way humans act and react. He also stated these actions and what is understood contribute to societal order. Another factor the theorist shared is that humans experience in-depth relationships. These relationships also contribute to cultural makeup and order. In the essay, Gerbner (2013) also explained that (at the time it was originally written) he found television to be the number one consumed activity of the general public. This activity did not have to be scheduled; it was directly accessible to people inside their own homes. He also noted the television required no literacy skills, unlike print media, and that television is how some became educated about various topics. He included that since the invention and growth in popularity of the television, children who are born into households that have a television are inundated with its messages since birth. Another concept of age, or agelessness, he noted is that messages seen on a television have no real regulation. While he did note that there are specific programming items and time slots designated for more specific audiences, it is possible that more mature content could be seen by younger audiences. The theorist stated that based on all of his observations and findings, the television and its programming was a medium that no longer created a large separation between classes and groups since it had become so popular and mainstream. He noted that the consumption of television had become a ritual and was not only repetitive but had become formula based. Therefore, based on all of these components, Gerbner (2013) stated that he believed that television had become a new religion.

Gerbner (1998) expanded on the concept of mainstreaming in an essay on the overview of Cultivation Analysis. He stated that television had become globalized and therefore essentially chose and dictated what topics or ideas were mainstreamed. He noted that businesses and companies who purchased advertisements on this medium also contributed to mainstreaming. He also added that television (at the time) had not only become the main source of entertainment but also the main source of socialization. Again, he referenced the popularity of the television and for many, the incorporation of it and its messages since birth. The theorist stated that the concept of a religion and societal order comes from the repetition of patterns. From his viewpoint, the television and its programming were now the religion that was dictating the social norms and shaping cultures with its now global influence (Gerbner, 1998).

Shrum's (1999) study highlighted this notion of belief altering programming by focusing on the influence soap operas had on participants' attitudes. More specifically, the participants' attitudes about marriage, divorce, distrust of others, and wealth. The researcher noted that cultivation effects were found in those who reported they watched more soap operas than those who reported they were light viewers. The heavy viewers of soap operas not only had more concrete ideas about the topics listed above but their attitudes toward these topics were more extreme. Meaning, participants who were heavy viewers believed that they would most likely be cheated on by a significant other or if they should get married, the marriage would likely end in divorce.

In addition to soap operas, other television programming has been linked to attitude creation or adjustment. Bilandzic, Schnell, and Sukalla (2019) conducted a quantitative study on the effects of exposure to television and the engagement of certain narratives. The authors

utilized a variety of television genres including crime shows, dramas taking place in a medically-based setting, and situation comedies. The purpose of the study was to learn how, if at all, fictional television shows, and the time spent consuming them, impacted the participants' view of morality in the real world. The results showed that none of the genres had an impact on the participants' world views. However, the authors noted that though small, some positive significance was found between television exposure overall and the level of impact the exposure had on participants regarding certain topics. Those topics included beliefs about professional altruism, just world beliefs, and the idea of tolerance of otherness. Other results showed that while some of the tests were inconsistent, the general findings concluded that the participants' immersion into a television show did in some way shape two areas. Those areas were how participants thought about real-world morals and how those morals would be carried out in real-life situations.

Scharrer and Blackburn (2018) used Cultivation Theory in their study of exposure to reality television and the way participants interpreted and perceived aggression. The authors focused their study specifically on a type of programming that they called docusoaps, which is a combination of the words 'documentary' and 'soap opera.' The authors defined the term as "a subgenre featuring adults in romantic, friendship, and familial relationships in everyday domestic settings" (p. 236). Some examples of this type of programming included the shows *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, *The Hills*, and *Jersey Shore*. Scharrer and Blackburn (2018) studied the impact docusoap programming had on viewers' perceptions of violence and aggression. The results indicated that the participants watched an average of two and a half hours of television per day. However, the amount of time spent watching television overall did not predict the approval of aggression, both physical and/or verbal. Looking

specifically at the amount of time spent viewing docusoaps, results showed that the participants who spent more time viewing docusoaps were more likely to approve of verbal aggression. The authors proposed this approval of verbal aggression could be attributed to the fact that verbal aggression is what is shown in the docussoap programming. In other words, more time viewing docusoaps led to verbal aggression being deemed as more normal behavior. Concerning the issue of overall approval of aggressive behavior, the authors noted that the male participants approved of both types of aggression for both the male and female characters more than the female participants did.

Since Cultivation Theory's inception, there have been numerous studies done to further literature on the subject. Many studies have focused on television exposure and the type of programming the viewers were consuming. The areas of television programming that previous studies have covered include fictional television shows, reality television shows, and programming found within local and national television news broadcasts. Still, other studies have taken newspapers, radio programs, and distribution of news on social media platforms into account (Bilandzic, Schnell, & Sukalla, 2019; Chadee, Smith, & Ferguson, 2019; García-Castro & Pérez-Sánchez, 2018; Khan & Bruschke, 2016; Lee & Niedereppe, 2011; Scharrer & Blackburn, 2018). While not all studies have found a correlation between media consumption and its influence on participants, more specific research has pinpointed some aspects in which cultivation effects are stronger.

The studies above show the link between the amount of media consumption and cultivated beliefs. Therefore, the following hypothesis was created.

H3: People who consume a greater amount of media will be more likely to have a negative perception of journalists.

Carry Over Effects and Transportability

Morgan, Shanahan, and Signorielli (2015) noted that even though consumers of media may understand that a story is fictional, the content is still perceived as realistic by the consumer. Even with this understanding of the programming being fictional, the consumer will still experience carry-over. Meaning, the impressions made by the media will continue to shape the consumer's interpretations of the message even after they are finished consuming the message. This carry-over effect has also been the subject of studies conducted involving the use of Cultivation Theory.

Bilandzic and Busselle (2008) addressed the issue of carry-over effects or transportability, in their study. They defined narrative transportation as a consumer being involved in or carried away by, a story or the content they are consuming. The researchers looked at specific genres of film and television programming. They noted that a person with high transportability took on the character's perspective about the situation rather than looking at the plot through their own perspective. The researchers found attitudes to be correlated with transportation after the exposure to the programming. They continued by stating, "This suggests that the worldview contained in a genre is reinforced slightly after each exposure" (p. 526). The researchers also noted that they believed the ability to experience this transportation was a personality trait. Though this trait is specific to individuals, they noted that the trait did increase the impact of belief cultivation and influence. Other studies have also been conducted to include or pinpoint narrative transportation.

García-Castro and Pérez-Sánchez (2018) studied the amount of television consumption and its influence on fear of crime. The researchers included both fictional and

non-fictional programming in their study. Through a survey, they found that one group that had a higher fear of crime. This group included participants who consumed more television programming and who also had more, or a higher level of, narrative transportation. In their study, narrative transportation is defined as the level of how much the participant loses themselves in a story. Their results indicated that this loss -of-self impacts their views or beliefs.

When Gerbner originated and created Cultivation Theory, there were three major television networks (Griffin, Ledbetter, & Sparks, 2015). Currently, there are many different platforms on which consumers receive messages. Morgan, Shanahan, and Signorielli (2015) noted the increase in streaming platforms, like Netflix or Hulu, that tailor programming to an individual's watching habits. The researchers also noted that there has been an increase in networks and programming directed toward specific groups, whether they be minorities or subcultures. They noted that this type of personalized content and cultivation of one's own media environment could lead to polarization. This polarization could in turn lead to other detrimental effects regarding message perception.

Cultivation Theory and Need for Cognition

Several researchers have explored possible moderators of the cultivation effect (i.e. Shrum, 2001; Shrum & Bischak, 2001). The way media consumers process information has been shown to influence the extent to which media alters their views (Shrum, 2001). For example, Good (2009) used Cultivation Theory in a study of environmentalists' thought process while watching television, how much television they watched, and how they reportedly perceived environmental issues along with their attitudes about those issues. She utilized the Need for Cognition Scale to research how active the environmentalists reported

themselves to be when it came to critical thinking and information processing. The NFC scale was developed to further explain what motivates people to process information the way they do. This motivation to think critically also impacts attitude changes (Good, 2009).

Good's (2009) study considered cultivation effects from non-fictional (such as newscasts and documentaries) and fictional programming. Results showed that the environmentalists who viewed more television programming rated issues related to the environment lower in severity than the issues actually were. The same environmentalists also scored higher on the NFC scale. Meaning, the environmentalists who said they enjoyed thinking critically and watched more television did not perceive environmental issues to be as severe. The more television the environmentalists watched, the less concerned they were about issues concerning the environment. Good (2009) also noted that higher cultivation effects were seen in tests run on fictional programming and all scales used in her study. However, when it pertained to non-fictional programming, results indicated that higher content intake was correlated to the participants having more concern about the environment. The NFC scale has also been used in other studies involving concern about certain issues.

Bergan and Lee (2018) used Cultivation Theory for their research on the relationship between participants' media literacy, need for cognition, and reactions to news related to terrorism. They hypothesized that media literacy would combat the alleged influence news media had on viewers. However, they found that even a higher degree of media literacy was not related to the perception of terrorism. The need for cognition in participants was slightly related to, or showed some significance, toward processing or creating concerns about the perceived threat of terrorism in participants.

Shrum, Burroughs, and Rindfleisch (2005) used Cultivation Theory to guide their research on the link between materialistic thoughts and television viewing. The researchers used a short form of the NFC scale in a survey. They found that those who scored higher on the NFC scale had a stronger relationship between television viewing and materialism than those who scored lower on the NFC scale. As such, participants who had a higher NFC score were more likely to pay attention to what they were watching versus those participants with a lower score. The same researchers conducted another experiment and used an 18-item version of the NFC scale for the study. Participants watched a segment of a movie and ads following the segment and wrote down their thoughts throughout the viewing period. The researchers found that those with a higher NFC score wrote down more positive thoughts. However, a higher NFC score was not related to neutral or unfavorable thoughts. The researchers explained their results by noting that those who score higher on the NFC scale and who consume more content are actively watching the programming. This engagement in programming also fits with the idea of increased transportability leading to more carry over. Since these specific viewers are not seeking out content to develop counter arguments, they are more likely to experience transportation and therefore, experience cultivation effects. Though the higher scoring NFC participants experienced more cultivation effects, the researchers stated that the lower scoring participants also experienced some effects as well. These results led the researchers to conclude that both active and passive viewers of programming will still be influenced by cultivation to a degree. In summary, prior research has consistently shown an inverse relationship between NFC and cultivation effects. Therefore, despite an abundance of media that portray journalists negatively, those with a higher NFC should be less influenced by said media than those with a lower NFC.

H4: People who score higher on the need for cognition scale will have a more negative perception of journalists than those who score lower on the need for cognition.

The Term *Fake News* and its Influence on Twitter Users

Research on media influence is not restricted to television and film, but includes social media as well. Tamul, Ivory, Hotter, and Wolf (2020) focused their research on the term *Fake News*, its inception, and deviation from the original definition. They looked at the amount of exposure to tweets using the term *Fake News* and how that exposure influenced the levels of distrust and skepticism in Twitter users. The term *Fake News* was originally meant to alert consumers of satirical articles or fictional articles that are presented as fact. Since 2016, the authors noted that the term *Fake News* has been used to discredit actual journalists and reporters who do report facts. The researchers did note that some participants who saw tweets using the term *Fake News* were more likely to seek out more information or news reports about the particular topic mentioned in the tweet. However, the usage of this term had indeed damaged the general public's perception of most news media stations, companies, and individual employees in the news business. One way this damage can be seen is by the increase in the level of skepticism the general public has toward news media stations and individual reports. The researchers found that the amount of *Fake News* tweets seen by the public did influence the amount of skepticism the public had concerning news reports. Other findings indicated that narrative and transportation were linked to attitude in participants who consumed more tweets. The researchers hypothesized that news stories presented in a narrative format would increase the level of transportability in the consumer. This hypothesis was supported through the tests the researchers ran with the data collected in

their study. While this study pertained directly to the Twitter platform, many other social media platforms are utilized to distribute news content.

Social Media Usage and Cultivated Beliefs

Kalogeropoulos, Suiter, Udris, and Eisenegger (2019) noted that over the last one to two decades, the way people access and receive news has changed. This change is due to the advances in technology and the ever-increasing number of news sites and organizations, ranging from ethically-based to blog-style, gossip, or editorial material. Combining these digital advances and increased usage of social media while factoring in the general public's trust of the news media, the researchers hypothesized that the public's usage of mainstream or non-mainstream news sources would determine or impact their level of trust in news media. The researchers found that participants who used mainstream sources for news, like television, newspapers, or radio, had more trust in news media. Likewise, participants who gathered their news from non-mainstream sources, like the internet and sometimes from social media, were also more trusting of news media. However, the results showed that participants who used social media as the main source of news gathering and consumption were less trusting of news media. The researchers also noted that the participants who used a higher number of non-mainstream sources for news had less trust overall in news media. While there is a gap in the literature using Cultivation Theory to specifically analyze attitudes about journalists and social media usage, the results from Kalogeropoulos, et al. (2019) and Tamul et al. (2020) are a starting point. Based on this literature the following hypothesis was generated.

H5: People who follow a specific journalist or reporter on social media will have a more positive perception of journalists.

Gaps in Literature Involving Journalists

Singer (2018) analyzed a variety of theories and how they relate to the news industry, journalists as individuals, public perceptions and impact, and the advances in digital media. Those theories included Cultivation Theory and Media Effects. Other aspects analyzed included the usage of the theories and how effective they were when it came to advances in technology and an individual's ability to access the internet. Singer (2018) noted that a number of studies focused on how journalists use new media and various platforms, such as social media, but there are still many more questions to be answered about the industry and its impact on the general public. The researcher also suggested that more studies should be done from different perspectives, such as from the perspective of those who work in the news industry. Another suggestion from the researcher was that theories could be updated to include more specific focal points that include subgroups and possibly even a creation of a new theory or concept that would relate directly to those groups.

MacGregor, Cooper, Coombs, and DeLuca (2020) noted in their analysis of co-production studies, or studies conducted by both researchers and individuals within the group being studied, that there is a lack of co-produced studies involving journalists. The researchers noted that they found this gap in communication research literature. They noted three reasons for the lack of co-produced studies. Those reasons included a negative perception of the interactions between journalists and the researchers, a history of negative interactions between researchers and journalists, and complexity of the interactions themselves. The researchers stated that they found a number of reasons for hesitation from both sides. For example, on the side of the researchers, fear of media coverage and unwanted attention were contributing factors. From the journalists' perspective, the feeling of biased

research that was often negative or against the news industry and lack of appreciation for the work done by journalists was noted.

Singer's (2018) analysis, the study conducted by MacGregor et al. (2020), in addition to other works referenced above can be used to show the link between the many topics discussed by this researcher. Those topics include narrative, Cultivation Theory, Need for Cognition, transportability, influence of attitude by various types of media consumption, and finally, a need for more studies conducted from the perspective of journalists. This researcher's observations based on previously existing literature has led to the following research questions:

RQ1: Does the income level of the non-journalist participants have an impact on how journalists are viewed by the general public?

RQ2: What do journalists currently working in the field attribute as a catalyst for the increase in hostile behavior toward journalists?

METHODOLOGY

To gain insight on these hypotheses and research questions, participants were asked to take a survey. However, participants for this study were split into two categories. The first category included journalists and those who work in the news industry. The second category included those who do not work in the news industry.

Non-Journalist Survey

Recruitment

Amazon's Mechanical Turk, or MTurk, was utilized as the posting and distribution platform for the survey where participants were non-journalists. On MTurk, the participants were presented with the following message describing the survey:

You are being asked to take a survey by Senora Scott who is conducting a research project at Angelo State University. The study consists of participants completing, online, two questionnaires: the Need for Cognition (NFC) Scale, Media Trust Scale (MTS), and researcher-generated questions. Completing the study will take approximately 30 minutes. For this project, you will be asked a series of questions about your impressions and perception of journalists and the amount of media you consume. There are no specific or special requirements to take this survey. However, if the participant is a journalist or is related to a journalist, their HIT will be rejected. For completing this survey, you will be given a small stipend, 20 cents, for your time.

Survey

Qualtrics, which is an online, password protected, data collection host was used to build this survey. Before beginning the survey, participants were asked to sign a consent form. Participants were also informed that they are under no obligation to participate and

could stop at any time during the survey for any reason. If participants chose to stop taking the survey at any point, they would not be penalized in any way. No identifying information was gathered as there were no questions regarding personal and possibly traumatic information and experiences.

Measures

The survey placed on MTurk was created specifically for non-journalists and would present participants with a shortened version of the Need for Cognition Scale (NFC), and a modified version of the Media Trust Scale (Kohring & Matthes, 2007) and researcher-generated questions. These questions gathered data regarding how respondents felt about journalists or news media and their consumption patterns of movies, TV shows, and social media.

Need for Cognition. The shortened version of the NFC consisted of 22 items that were presented as statements where participants ranked the degree to which they disagreed or agreed with the statement on a seven-point likert-type scale. (1= “*Strongly Disagree*”, 7= “*Strongly Agree*”). Examples of the items in the scale include: *I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions to problems* and *I would prefer a task that is intellectual, difficult, and important to one that is somewhat important but does not require much thought*. (For the full NFC scale see appendix A). On the NFC scale utilized for the survey, 14 items were reverse coded. The 22 item NFC scale was tested for reliability and resulted in a score of $\alpha=.89$.

Media Trust Scale. The modified version of the Media Trust Scale (MTS) consisted of 16 items that were presented as statements where participants ranked the degree to which they disagreed or agreed with the statement on a seven-point likert-type scale. (1= “*Strongly*

Disagree,” 7= “*Strongly Agree*”). The MTS addressed selectivity of topics, selectivity of facts, accuracy of depictions, and journalistic assessment. The journalistic assessment portion of the MTS scale was utilized to test participants’ perception of journalists. This four-item scale was tested for reliability and resulted in a score of $\alpha=.91$. This scale consisted of the following items: *I feel that the journalistic assessments regarding relevant issues are useful. Criticism is expressed in an adequate manner by news media journalists. The journalists’ opinions are well-founded. The commentary regarding relevant issues consists of well-reflected conclusions.* (For the full MTS scale see appendix B).

Media Habits. Participants were asked by the researcher to indicate their media habits and amount of media consumption. These researcher-generated questions were presented in a “yes/no” format. For example, participants saw the following questions, *Do you get news updates from social media? Do you follow at least one individual journalist/reporter on social media?* Other questions were asked in a format that gave participants multiple choice answers. For example, *On average, how many movies do you watch per week? On average, how many hours a day do you spend on Facebook? How many total social media platforms do you use?* (For the full list of researcher-generated questions, see Appendix C).

Demographics. All non-journalist participants were asked to fill in demographic questions. These questions included gender and race. For these two demographic questions, multiple choice answers were provided. When asked about their age, participants were given the opportunity to enter the exact number. These participants were also asked to indicate their salary range in the survey.

Journalist Survey

Recruitment

For journalists and news industry employees, a different survey was created. Qualtrics was also utilized to build this survey. The survey created specifically for journalists was presented in social media groups. These groups were created specifically for journalists and those who work in the news business on the platform Facebook. The groups included MMJane, Storytellers, and Sisters in Storytelling. The snowball sampling method was also utilized for this survey. The researcher has worked as a journalist for 10 years and is part of these social media groups. The following message was presented to potential participants along with the link to the survey:

Hello, you are being asked to participate in a survey specifically designed for journalists and those who work in the news industry. Participation is completely voluntary. This survey is part of a research project done by Senora Scott at Angelo State University that will be utilized to gain a better understanding of the scenarios and dangers journalists face. If you would like to, please share this survey with others in the news industry.

Survey

Before beginning the survey, participants were asked to sign a consent form and were informed that they are under no obligation to participate and that they could stop at any time during the survey for any reason. If participants chose to stop taking the survey at any point, they would not be penalized in any way. No identifying information was gathered since there are questions regarding personal and possibly traumatic information and experiences. No compensation was given to these participants.

Measures

The participants were asked to choose which job category they best fit into: multimedia journalists/reporter, producer or production, management, or other. For this study, the terms multimedia journalist and reporter are defined as a news employee who goes out into the field to report on a topic. These employees are also responsible for writing, editing, and filming their own content. Photographers would also fit into this category. For the category of producer or production, these choices encompass those who work behind the scenes to help put together or put on a newscast. Producers and production staff do not have an on-air role. They also do not come into contact with the general public as much as employees who do have an on-air role or duties. Another category is listed as management. Management includes primary, secondary, and tertiary managers such as General Managers, News Directors, and/or Assistant News Directors.

For news industry employees who took the survey, researcher-generated questions gathered information about any encounters involving violence, sexual harassment, harassment, or threats made on social media or in person while they were reporting in the field. Questions were presented in a “yes/no” answer format and included, *Have you experienced an act of physical violence while working in the news industry? Have you experienced an act of verbal harassment while working in the news industry? Have you experienced an act of sexual harassment while working in the news industry?* Other questions inquired about coworkers and station safety protocols such as, *Do you know a colleague/coworker who has been verbally harassed while working in the news industry? Do you know a colleague/coworker who has been sexually harassed while working in the*

news industry? Has your current news station put any new safety measures/protocols into place within the last year?

Participants were also asked an open-ended question: *What do you think is a contributing factor to hostility towards journalists/reporters?* (For full list of survey questions, see appendix D)

Demographics. All participants were asked to fill in demographic questions which included age, gender, and race. Participants were also asked how long they had been in their current position, the Designated Market Area ranking of their current station, and in which state they were currently working.

RESULTS

Non-Journalist Survey

Participants

A total of 290 responses were recorded, however 95 responses were deleted. Participants who were journalists or related to journalists were disqualified from taking the survey and accounted for 91 of the deleted responses. The remaining four responses were deleted because the participants did not consent. Data from 195 participants met eligibility for analysis. Of the participants ($N=195$), 129 were male, 65 were female, and one chose 'prefer not to say.' Further demographic analysis indicated that 104 participants were Caucasian, six were African American, seven chose Latino or Hispanic, 64 were Asian, six indicated Native-American, two participants chose 'two or more races,' one indicated unknown race, and five chose 'prefer not to say.' The ages of the participants ranged from 20-years-old to 71-years-old ($M=34$). Income levels were also reported by participants. Participants making up 20.5 percent of those responses indicated their household income to be from \$50,000 to \$74,999 per year. An equal number of participants, 20.5 percent, indicated their household income to be between \$75,000 and \$99,999 per year.

Hypotheses and Research Question

The program SPSS was utilized to analyze data. To test Hypothesis 3, which stated that people who consume a greater amount of media will be more likely to have a negative perception of journalists, a linear regression was run. Findings indicated that there was no statically significant relationship between media consumption and perception of journalists, $F(1,193)=.25$, $R^2=.001$, $p = .615$. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Hypothesis 4 stated that people who score higher on the Need for Cognition scale will have a more negative perception of journalists than those who score lower on the Need for Cognition scale. To analyze this hypothesis, a linear regression was run. The analysis shows that there is significance between those who score higher on the NFC scale and their perception of journalists. Findings indicated that $F(1,193)=22.65$, $R^2=.11$, $p=.000$. Therefore, this hypothesis was supported.

Hypothesis 5 stated that people who follow a specific journalist or reporter on social media will have a more positive perception of journalists. To analyze this hypothesis an independent sample t-test was run. Results of the test indicated that those who followed a journalist or reporter on social media had more positive perceptions of journalists than those who do not follow a journalist or reporter on social media, $t(193)=3.86$, $p=.000$. Therefore, hypothesis 5 was supported.

Research Question 1 also addressed the general public. RQ 1 asked, does income level have an impact on how journalists are viewed by the general public? To test this, a linear regression was run with findings indicated that there was significance found between income level and the way journalists are perceived by the public, $F(1,193)=6.16$, $R^2=.03$, $p=.014$. Results showed that participants who had higher income levels also had a more positive perception of journalists.

Journalist Survey

Participants

A total of 72 responses were recorded. However, a total of 17 responses were ineligible for use with one participant not consenting and 16 incomplete data sets. Therefore, a total of 55 responses met the criteria for eligibility. SPSS was also utilized to analyze this

survey data. The participants ($N=55$) indicated in which state or Designated Market Area (DMA) they worked. DMAs are ranked based on population and media consumption. DMAs range from 1 New York, New York to 210 Glendive, Montana (Media Tracks Communications, 2021). The results of the survey showed that responses were recorded from journalists working in 30 different states and a wide range of DMAs, with DMAs 1 from 196 being represented. One participant indicated they worked for a national news organization. Participants also indicated their gender; 19 were male, 34 were female, and one participant chose 'prefer not to say,' and one participant chose not to respond at all. A breakdown of racial demographics indicated that 43 participants were Caucasian, two were African American, seven chose Latino or Hispanic, one was Asian, and one participant chose 'prefer not to say.' The age range for participants ranged from 21-years-old to 61-years-old ($M=32$). Demographic analysis also showed that 40 participants indicated they had worked in the field of journalist for five or fewer years while 15 participants had worked in the field for six or more years.

Hypotheses and Research Question

Hypothesis 1 was broken down into three parts to include H1a, H1b, and H1c. H1a stated that people who have worked in the field of journalism longer have experienced more acts of violence. To test this hypothesis, participants ($N=55$) were placed into two groups. The first group encompassed journalists who indicated they had worked in the field for five years or less. This category was called the novice category. The second group included journalists who indicated they had worked in the field for six or more years. This category is referred to as the senior category. A chi-square test revealed that those who worked in the journalism field for more than 5 years did not report experiencing violence more than those

who worked in the field for 5 years or less, $X^2 (1, N=55)=1.6$, $V^* = .17$, $p = .206$. Therefore, H1a was not supported.

H1b stated that there is not a difference between the acts of harassment experienced by either category of senior or novice reporters. To test for this statement, a chi-square test was run on the data. Results indicated that H1b was supported, as there was no significance found between the two groups $X^2 (1, N=55)=3.5$, $V^* = .25$, $p = .061$.

H1c stated that there is not a difference between the acts of sexual harassment experienced by either category of senior or novice reporters. To test for this statement, a chi-square test was run on the data. H1c was supported because there was no significance or difference between the two groups when it came to encounters of sexual harassment, $X^2 (1, N=55)= 3.74$, $V^* = .26$, $p = .053$.

Hypothesis 2 stated that females currently working in the field of journalism have experienced more violence than males. A chi-square test was utilized to test this hypothesis. Results indicated that H2 was not supported, $X^2 (1, N=55)=2.06$, $V^* = .20$, $p = .357$.

Research Question 2 related directly to journalists. RQ2 asked, what do journalists currently working in the field attribute as a catalyst for the increase in hostile behavior towards journalists? This was an open-ended question listed in the survey. Thematic analysis was used to separate the responses into categories. Three categories were found; politics or politicians using anti-media rhetoric, the general public's lack of media-literacy or understanding of what journalism entails, and social media creating mistrust or false portrayals of journalists. Examples of these categories include the following comments from participants. The category of politicians creating and contributing to anti-media rhetoric featured statements such as:

The Trump administration was the worst thing to ever happen to local news. His personal war on the media affected local news when viewers started to lose trust in our work. Any story that we produce is now questioned and often immediately considered false. Reporters online are now harassed and are called fake news and liberal media just for posting a factual story that the viewer may not like.

Other responses in this category were similar to this comment from a participant:

I would say a lot of this is from heated politics. I think former president Trump enraged a lot of people and sent mixed messages. He says fake news and people think he means local news.

The second category of responses featured comments about the general public's lack of understanding of journalism as a profession and the lack of media literacy. Comments such as, *"Ignorance, unwillingness to see journalists as people," "Lack of understanding of the purpose of journalism,"* and *"Uneducated viewers,"* were made by participants. Other statements addressed the broad labeling of all media types and the viewer's lack of knowledge about the difference between news and commentary.

The third category of comments included many about social media, internet access, and inaccurate content. Comments in this category included, *"False portrayal and lies about what we do and how we do it," "Internet access; it allows access to plenty of information but also plenty of opinion and people are not taught or do not care to distinguish between them,"* and *"Social media, lack of fact checking, confirmation bias."*

Other issues were also included in this area. Participants voiced their concerns over poor pay, less people staffing news stations, burn out, being overworked, and high turnover

rates. Relations between viewers and news personnel were also brought up by a few participants.

DISCUSSION

Journalists

Hypothesis 1a stated that people who have worked in the field of journalism longer have experienced more acts of violence. Results show that Hypothesis 1a was not supported. This outcome aligns with data collected by the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker (2021). That data shows that more physical attacks on journalists were recorded in the past five years with a large increase in attacks being recorded in the year 2020 alone. Something noteworthy about these findings is that all of the journalists and news employee participants in this researcher's study were living in the United States and had to be a United States resident to complete the survey. While previous surveys and literature have focused on and provided evidence of violence against journalists working outside of America, this study shows that American journalists are facing violence at rates that are comparable to journalists who are working in other countries. Another reason that could have contributed to this result is that often, people who experience violence do not report the incident or if they do, it is in an informal way such as a verbal statement to a coworker or supervisor (Arnetz, Hamblin, Ager, Luborsky, Upfal, Russell & Essenmacher, 2015). If participants in this survey felt uncomfortable with the questions regarding violence, that discomfort could have impacted their responses. Another issue could be the definition of violence itself. Hamby (2017) stated that there are often misconceptions when it comes to defining violence and the minimization of certain encounters can contribute to a lack of understanding about violent encounters. Despite Hypothesis 1a being unsupported, the findings could still be considered a contribution to research because they indicate that for these participants, violence was still experienced despite the length of time spent in the news business. Future research could focus on

specifically defining violence and violent acts. Then, researchers could conduct another survey specifically for journalists that could delve into specific violent acts the participants had experienced. For example, did verbal harassment lead to a violent encounter? Did that violent encounter take place in the field or in a newsroom? Was the attacker known to the journalist or was the attacker a stranger? The results of Hypothesis 1a can begin to fill a gap in literature by sparking curiosity regarding the topic of members of the general public targeting journalists to be the recipients of violent acts.

Hypothesis 1b stated that there is not a difference between the acts of harassment experienced by either category of senior or novice reporters. These results show that Hypothesis 1b was supported since there was no significance found between the two groups. These results are also similar to the findings of Hypothesis 1c which stated that there is not a difference between the acts of sexual harassment experienced by either category of senior or novice reporters. Hypothesis 1c was also supported. The results from both of these hypotheses add to previous literature that shows the profession of journalism can be a hostile one with harassment and sexual harassment being experienced no matter the level of seniority (Eberspacher, 2019; Finneman & Jenkins, 2018; Graff, 2020). These findings also reinforce the idea that no actions are being taken to hold the harassers responsible for their behavior. Further analysis could ask participants to distinguish between whether the harassment had taken place within a newsroom or was an encounter with someone from the general public. The evidence from the tests run for H1b and H1c should be presented to and considered by newsroom leaders and managers. Understanding that there is an issue when it comes to harassment and violence is the first step to creating a plan of action and safety protocols. These protocols should not only take physical health and well-being into

consideration but also mental health and well-being. One other factor that should be taken into consideration regarding these findings is that while the majority of participants were female, there were male journalists who also responded to this survey. While some may think of harassment and sexual harassment only happening to females, these results indicate that males have also experienced these types of harassment. Future research could focus on getting an equal number of both male and female participants to test whether females or males receive more harassment and sexual harassment. Another line of questioning could seek out where these acts of harassment and sexual harassment were experienced. Also, researchers could ask participants if these acts of harassment were reported to supervisors or the company's human resources department and if any action was taken to follow up on these reports.

Hypothesis 2 stated that females currently working in the field of journalism have experienced more violence than males however, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. Despite having a majority of female participants in this survey, results indicated that female journalists did not experience more violence while in the field. This finding could be explained by previous literature that stated female journalists are often not taken as seriously as male journalists and are seen as annoying rather than professional. These findings could also be linked to gender stereotypes also mentioned in existing literature. Researchers stated that female journalists were not as well respected as male journalists while also noting that females were often given assignments based more on gender than on qualifications or skills (Ghiglione & Saltzman, 2005; McNair, 2010; Shaffer, 2009). These results could also be linked to Hypothesis 1a if the participants did not report experiencing violence at all due to discomfort or lack of acknowledging they had indeed experienced a violent act (Arnetz et al.,

2015). Though Hypothesis 2 was not supported, further studies could be conducted to investigate gender roles within newsrooms. Papper (2020) stated that in 2020, there was an overall increase in people of color and women holding positions within newsrooms, but that increase was slight. He also stated that women make up at least 45 percent of newsroom employees, but the news industry is still male dominated with males holding more managerial positions. Another issue to focus future research on could include sexual orientation. Inquiries on this study could include whether sexual orientation played a role in any form of violence. Social Role Theory or any theory related to gender studies could be utilized to conduct more specific research.

Research Question 2 asked, what do journalists currently working in the field attribute as a catalyst for hostile behavior towards journalists? The answers shared by participants provided valuable insight for future research projects and studies. Answers ran the gamut, citing politicians, anti-media rhetoric, poor working conditions, inaccurate portrayals of journalists and the news business, and lack of education from the public. These answers could be the starting point for a multitude of studies that could hone in on specific qualities or actions. A largely unstudied area regarding journalism and the news industry includes research done within or about newsrooms themselves. The answers from participants that address issues in the workplace also showcase the need for more studies to be done about workplace communication and newsroom culture. Walsh-Childers, Chance, and Herzog (1996) conducted a study about pay gaps and performance expectations based on gender within the newsroom for a printed newspaper. Results indicated that many of the women were frustrated with these issues that seemed to never go away. Less pay, burnout, and frustration resulted in high turn-over rates for female newspaper journalists. This is an

example of one type of study that could be redone because of two reasons. The first is that this study was conducted 25 years ago. The second is that despite nearly three decades, the answers from participants in this study echoed the same sentiments as the study conducted in 1996. The gap between Walsh-Childers, Chance, and Herzog's (1996) study and this study indicate that the same issues continue to arise within newsrooms. This study contributes to the evidence that more data needs to be gathered about newsroom cultures so efforts to eradicate toxicity and improve communication can be established.

Non-Journalists

Hypothesis 3 stated that people who consume a greater amount of media will be more likely to have a negative perception of journalists. Hypothesis 3 was not supported. A possible explanation for these results could be linked to what Bilandzic and Busselle (2008) found in their study of carry-over effects or transportability. The authors stated that these effects were more likely to be connected to a personality trait rather than simply a result of exposure as a whole. Another possible explanation could be participant truthfulness. Nielson (2018) reported that on average, adults over the age of 18 spent 11 or more hours a day consuming media. This consumption came in the form of watching programming, listening to programming, or interaction on a media platform in some way. Some participants in this study indicated that on average, they did not even spend that much time consuming media, such as nonfictional, fictional programming, or movies per week. Future surveys could include a more specific definition of what media consumption is or entails along with asking questions about streaming services. Though Hypothesis 3 was not supported, it still contributes to literature by highlighting the current state of media saturation. As stated previously, when Gerbner (1998, 2013) originally created Cultivation Theory, there were

only a few major television networks and television was the dominant form of media consumption by the general public. Currently, with the variation of media platforms and streaming services available, there is a wide array of programming awaiting consumption. Members of the general public could possibly be in more control of the type of content they are consuming versus several decades ago when there were far fewer options.

Hypothesis 4 stated that people who score higher on the Need for Cognition scale will have a more negative perception of journalists than those who score lower on the Need for Cognition scale. Results showed that this hypothesis was supported. Meaning, the participants who identified as more intellectual had a more negative perception of journalists. This result aligns with findings by Bergan and Lee (2018) and Shrum, Burroughs, and Rindfleisch (2005). These researchers noted a link between NFC scores and media literacy and higher NFC scores, and greater attention paid to programming respectively. The results from this study provide more insight into the need for media literacy and outreach initiatives. These initiatives could be put in place by local and national newsrooms. These results contribute to existing literature which could help newsrooms target a specific demographic (those who score higher on the NFC scale or those who consider themselves well-educated) for outreach regarding media literacy. While some groups, such as public libraries or nonprofits, do provide information regarding media literacy, the information is not heavily promoted. This means one must go on a search to find the information. The results for Hypothesis 4 could be presented to news media company owners and managers to showcase the need for outreach initiatives. These initiatives could also be coupled with the results found for Hypothesis 5.

Hypothesis 5 stated that people who follow a specific journalist or reporter on social media will have a more positive perception of journalists. Hypothesis 5 was supported. This finding is substantial because participants who indicated they were or were related to a journalist were excluded from the survey. This finding could be linked to previous literature by Kalogeropoulos, et al. (2019) and Tamul et al. (2020) which indicate that news consumers who have multiple sources to receive news are more trusting of news agencies and those who work in the news industry. These findings also provide a way to combat the issue addressed by McNair (2010) of the general public seeing real-life journalists as characters rather than human beings. Newsrooms could utilize these findings to help create promotional materials for their journalists. Based on the results of this study, promoting the reporter as a person rather than just a talking head on television could combat hostility that journalists may face when in the field.

The findings of this study can contribute greatly to future research involving violence against journalists, news media literacy, and trust in news media. Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 1c, and 2 show that physical attacks, harassment, and sexual harassment are prevalent in the field of journalism despite the level of experience a journalist has. These results indicate a great need for protection of journalists not only while they are in the field but the newsrooms in which they work. Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5 showcased the unmet demand for media literacy education and better understanding of news media and journalism as a profession for the general public. These findings can also spur calls to action. This data can be presented to newsroom managers and station owners furthering strong arguments for employee protection and the pursual of legal action against harassers. Another call to action is meeting the need for more media literacy education. This education could come in the form of school curriculum from

elementary to the collegiate level. Continuing education programs or public events could also be created by partnerships between public entities, such as libraries, and news stations to further the understanding of media literacy and the field of journalism.

Research Question 1 asked if income level had an impact on how journalists are perceived by the general public? The data in this study shows that to be correct. Income levels did have an impact on how the participants perceived journalists. The more the participant made, the more positive perception of journalists they had. This data aligns with what other studies that have found: wealth and financial security are associated with lower levels of anxiety (Abdel-Khalek & El-Yahfoufi 2005; Sages, Britt, & Cumbie, 2013). While these studies may not be directly related to news or news content, they could explain why participants with better financial security could have a more positive outlook in general. Future studies could narrow down how more affluent people receive news updates and to which types of programming they subscribe. These findings could lead to studies comparing income levels and the level to which participants related to the news stories they saw or the journalists reporting those stories. For example, do those in low-income housing feel like news stories relate more to their lives or the lives of the wealthy? Another question could be, does seeing a journalist of the same race and background make viewers feel more comfortable with a news program or news station? While this data is valuable and can be utilized in a variety of aspects, there are some limitations to consider.

LIMITATIONS

Some limitations in this research project include the number of participants for each survey. The survey created specifically for journalists had a total of 55 participants while the survey created specifically for non-journalists had a total of 195 participants. A larger sample and number of responses for each of these surveys would be ideal. Since there was no incentive or payment given to the journalist and newsroom employee participants, this may have hindered the number of responses.

Other limitations for the journalist-specific survey include the demographics for this sample. The majority of participants, 73 percent, indicated that they had only worked in the news business for less than five years. This may have impacted the results for hypothesis 1a. The number of male participants in the survey created for journalists was also low with only 19 males choosing to reveal their gender. Another limitation includes cultural diversity. In regard to racial demographics, 78 percent of participants listed their race as Caucasian. While multiple races were identified, minority races were vastly underrepresented in this category. Some of the data sets that had to be deleted was due to incompleteness. A possible explanation of this issue could be that if a participant was taking the survey at work within a newsroom and suddenly a news event happened, they would have to abandon the survey to focus on that event.

A limitation involving the survey for non-journalists could include political affiliation. Participants were not asked what their political affiliation was or if they had one at all. Gaining more insight on this matter could have allowed for possible correlations between political affiliation and perception of journalists to be found. Another limitation regarding this group would also be cultural perspective. More than 50 percent of participants in this

survey identified as Caucasian while 33 percent identified as Asian. The remainder of participants did indicate their race but their races were not as equally represented. Other demographics for participants in this survey also indicated that 66 percent were male. This majority percentage of male participants could have also had an influence on test results. Another factor to consider is that participants may have not been totally truthful about the amount of media they consume. While no identifying information was taken, participants may have still felt hesitant to admit how much media they consume.

Future research could include more studies done with partners in the news industry. These partnerships could lead to more specific research and insight into matters concerning issues not addressed by this study. While many of the hypotheses in this study were supported, Research Question 2 could lead to the development of new studies that are tailored to fit individual issues that news personnel face.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, more research needs to be conducted to understand the public's perception of journalists and the elements that cause the development of those perceptions. However, the data from this study could offer clues into which areas should be researched in depth. This study could also be utilized to create initiatives that can be acted upon by journalists and the general public. As a whole, this study contributes greatly to research regarding journalists in many ways.

Firstly, the results of this study can offer some explanation for behavioral aspects regarding the general public. The results of this study indicate that better, more personal interactions (whether in the field or online) with journalists can improve the general public's perception of those who work in news. These interactions can also lead to a better understanding of what the job duties of a journalist entail. This understanding can be communicated by the journalists themselves. One way journalists can achieve improved communication is by being transparent about their job duties with the general public. Transparency can be used as one initiative or part of a larger movement that is put into place by newsroom leaders.

Secondly, this study offers evidence that journalists, regardless of age or time in the business, receive harassment. Based on the answers from Research Question 2 along with survey results, participants valued the following from their employers: ensuring employee safety, better pay, and proving that steps are being taken to hold harassers accountable for their actions. These are just three ways that news organizations can improve the health and well-being of employees. When employee well-being and safety are considered, managers could see a positive increase in employee retention and career longevity.

Lastly, this study is an asset by simply, yet most importantly, adding to a chasmic gap in literature. There is an overwhelming amount of existing literature involving the errors or indiscretions of news media however, there is a colossal gap in literature that involves studies done from the perspective of a journalist. While Cultivation Theory was utilized for this research, other theories and approaches such as Standpoint Theory, Narrative, Rhetoric, and Muted Group Theory could be utilized to conduct further research.

Overall, this research contributes to the field of communication as a whole. This research combines findings from previously existing literature with new results, providing more evidence that Cultivation Theory is still relevant. Another asset to consider is the uniqueness of this study. This research is unique because it unifies a tried and tested theory with real-life experiences from a group that has been left unstudied for decades. The answers given by the journalist participants to Research Question 2 also provide issues and areas of interest that could be studied for years to come.

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APPENDIX A – NEED FOR COGNITION SCALE

1. I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions to problems.
2. I would prefer a task that is intellectual, difficult, and important to one that is somewhat important but does not require much thought.
3. I tend to set goals that can be accomplished only by expending considerable mental effort.
4. I am usually tempted to put more thought into a task than the job minimally requires.
5. Learning new ways to think doesn't excite me very much.
6. I am hesitant about making important decisions after thinking about them.
7. I usually end up deliberating about issues even when they do not affect me personally.
8. I prefer to let things happen rather than try to understand why they turned out that way.
9. I have difficulty in thinking in new and unfamiliar situations.
10. The idea of relying on thought to get my way to the top does not appeal to me.
11. The notion of thinking abstractly is not appealing to me.
12. I am an intellectual.
13. I only think as hard as I have to.
14. I don't reason well under pressure.
15. I like tasks that require little thought once I've learned them.
16. I prefer to think about small daily projects to long-term ones.
17. I would rather do something that requires little thought than something that is sure to challenge my thinking abilities.
18. I prefer watching educational to entertainment programs.

19. Simply knowing the answer rather than understanding the reasons or the answer to a problem is fine with me.

20. It's enough for me that something gets the job done; I don't care how or why it works.

21. Ignorance is bliss.

22. I enjoy thinking about an issue even when the results of my thoughts will have no outcome on the issue.

APPENDIX B - MEDIA TRUST SCALE

Selectivity of Topics

Relevant issues receive necessary attention from the news media.

Relevant issues are assigned an adequate status in the news media.

The frequency with which relevant issues are covered in news media is adequate.

Relevant issues are covered on a necessary and regular basis.

Selectivity of facts

The essential points of relevant issues are included in news media coverage.

The focus of news media coverage is on important facts.

All important information regarding relevant issues is provided by the news media.

Reporting on relevant issues includes different points of view.

Accuracy of depictions

The information in a report would be verifiable if examined.

The reported information is true.

The reports recount the facts truthfully.

The facts that I receive regarding relevant issues are correct.

Journalistic assessment

Criticism is expressed in an adequate manner by news media journalists.

The journalists' opinions are well-founded.

The commentary regarding relevant issues consists of well-reflected conclusions.

I feel that the journalistic assessments regarding relevant issues are useful.

APPENDIX C –RESEARCHER-GENERATED QUESTIONS, GENERAL PUBLIC

Have you ever had a personal encounter with a journalist/reporter?

Have you ever been asked to do an interview with a local news outlet?

Have you ever been asked to do an interview with a national or regional news outlet?

Have you ever been featured in a news report?

Do you get news updates from social media?

Do you follow a local news outlet on social media?

Do you follow a national news outlet on social media?

Do you follow at least one individual journalist/reporter on social media?

Where do you get most of your news updates?

On average, how many movies do you watch per week?

On average, how many hours of fictional television shows do you watch per week?

On average, how many hours of non-fictional television shows do you watch per week?

On average, how many hours a day do you spend on Facebook?

On average, how many hours a day do you spend on Twitter?

On average, how many hours a day do you spend on Instagram?

How many total social media platforms do you use?

Have you experienced sexual harassment on social media?

Have you been threatened with a violent act on social media?

Have you experienced verbal harassment on social media?

APPENDIX D –RESEARCHER-GENERATED QUESTIONS, JOURNALISTS

Have you experienced an act of physical violence while working in the news industry?

Have you experienced an act of verbal harassment while working in the news industry?

Have you experienced an act of sexual harassment while working in the news industry?

What do you think is a contributing factor to hostility towards journalists/reporters?

Have you experienced sexual harassment on social media during your time in the news industry?

Have you been threatened with a violent act on social media during your time in the news industry?

Have you experienced verbal harassment on social media during your time in the news industry?

Have you been threatened by a member of the general public in person while working in the news industry?

Do you know a colleague/coworker who has been threatened while working in the news industry?

Do you know a colleague/coworker who has been verbally harassed while working in the news industry?

Do you know a colleague/coworker who has been sexually harassed while working in the news industry?

Has your current news station put any new safety measures/protocols into place within the last year?

Has your current news station put any new safety measures/protocols into place within the last 2 to 5 years?

To your knowledge, has your current news station provided any mental health resources to its employees within the last year?

Which DMA (Designated Market Area) do you currently work in?

Which state do you currently work in?

Rate the degree to which you agree with the following statements:

I feel that hostility toward journalists/reporters from the general public has increased within the last 5 years.

I have personally experienced an instance of increased hostility toward journalists/reporters from the general public while in the field within the last year.

APPENDIX E –

APPENDIX F –

APPENDIX G –